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Teaching Uncle Sam's Solders and Sailors to Sing

EDITOR'S NOTE: Below are some random notes on some phases of a movement in which we are all interested if for no other reason than that these boys are all former music pupils of ours. "Songs of the Soldiers and Sailors"—words only, price, 25c, may be obtained from the Committee on Army and Navy Camp music, 130 E. 22nd St., N. Y. City.—P. W. D.

"A songless army," says Major General J. Franklin Bell, commander of the 48,000 men of the National Army at Camp Upton, Yaphank, Long Island, "would lack in the fighting spirit in proportion as it lacked responsiveness to music. There is no more potent force in developing unity in an army than that of song."

On a long hike—when army packs weigh, seemingly, a thousand pounds instead of the regulation fifty, when feet grow sore and faces ashy with fatigue—it is always song that pulls the men through, that puts new energy in lagging feet and makes whole companies swing into line with fresh vigor. Private Perks—he of the "Smile, Smile, Smile" habit—has done more to cheer the fighting men of the Allies than any other one cause. Private Perks has another job ahead, for his cheery philosophy and the songs to which "Smile, Smile, Smile" are kin, are to play an important part this winter in the training which the men will have who are making up the forces of the United States Army and Navy.

But it is always song that pulls the men through. In training the land and sea fighting forces for the big job ahead no one questions the importance of song. Army and Navy Officers are not simply permitting their men to sing—they are encouraging song in every way possible, and making a place on the over-crowded programs of camp routine for the song leaders' work. They know that song makes of a good soldier, a better soldier; that it makes a tired soldier, a rested soldier.

The first pioneers to start singing in the army were Geoffrey O'Hara, the young composer, who went down to the big mobilization camp at Fort Ordlethorpe, Ga.; Kenneth S. Clark, New York music critic and composer of a large number of Princeton University songs, who undertook the work at Allentown, Pa., Ambulance Training Corps camp; and Robert Lloyd a well-known vocal teacher, who took charge of the work in the Officers' Training camp at Fort Niagara.

They had to face absolutely new conditions. Geoffrey O'Hara looked his camp over and decided the only thing available for a leader's stand was a lumber pile. This worked all right—until the carpenters needed the lumber and took it away. There was no music, no scenic effects in vaudeville stage English, there were no "boards" to help the leaders "get their stuff over." They faced men who were physically exhausted with the hard routine of the day. It was up to the leader to interest, to entertain his men. If he couldn't do it there was nothing doing in the song business.

There is no easy transportation method for the song leader from regiment to regiment; he hikes, and his territory covers anything from three to six miles. Sometimes he is lucky enough to catch a "Garford Limited" in going from place to place. This is army parlance for the trucks, and their only "limit" is when nothing more can be piled on them.